IN THE CLAIMS

1-8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) An air induction component assembly comprising:

a first shell made from a laser-transparent material defining a first laser weld surface and including a first taper locking surface opposite from said first laser weld surface;

a second shell made from a laser absorbing material defining a second laser weld surface and including a second taper locking surface opposite from said second laser weld surface wherein said first laser weld surface comprises a first tapered surface defining a first angle and said second laser weld surface comprises a second tapered surface defining a second angle different than said first angle; and

a laser weld joint area formed at said first and second laser weld surfaces to permanently attach said first shell to said second shell wherein said first and second taper locking surfaces cooperate with each other to lock said first and second laser weld surfaces into abutting engagement at a predetermined pressure during a laser welding process, and wherein at least one of said first and second taper locking surfaces defines a taper angle that is at least twice that of both said first and second angles.

10. (Previously Presented) An air induction component assembly as set forth in claim 9 wherein the predetermined pressure is at least 190 pounds per square inch (psi).

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Previously Presented) An air induction component assembly as set forth in claim 9 wherein a laser beam is applied generally perpendicular to at least one of said first and second tapered surfaces.

13-22. (Cancelled)

23. (Currently Amended) An air induction component assembly comprising:

a first shell made from a laser-transparent material defining a first laser weld surface and including a first taper locking surface opposite from said first laser weld surface wherein said first shell includes a first wall extension having an inner wall surface and an outer wall surface, said first wall extension extending from a first base end to a first distal end with said first tapered weld surface and said first taper locking surface being formed on said first wall extension;

a second shell made from ~~an~~ a laser absorbing material defining a second laser weld surface and including a second taper locking surface opposite from said second laser weld surface wherein said first laser weld surface comprises a first tapered surface defining a first angle and said second laser weld surface comprises a second tapered surface defining a second angle different than said first angle, and wherein said second shell includes a second wall extension having an inner wall surface and an outer wall surface, said second wall extension extending from a second base end to a second distal end with said second tapered weld surface and said second taper locking surface being formed on said second wall extension, and wherein said first and said second wall extensions overlap each other such that said first and said second taper locking surfaces directly abut each other; and

a laser weld joint area formed at said first and second laser weld surfaces to permanently attach said first shell to said second shell wherein said first and second taper locking surfaces cooperate with each other to lock said first and second laser weld surfaces into abutting engagement at a predetermined pressure during a laser welding process.

24. (Previously Presented) An air induction component assembly as set forth in claim 23 wherein said first tapered weld surface tapers to a flat surface formed at said first distal end, said flat surface transitioning from said first tapered weld surface to said first taper locking surface.

25. (Previously Presented) An air induction component assembly as set forth in claim 24 including a first ledge surface transitioning from said inner wall surface of said first wall

extension to said first tapered weld surface, and a second ledge surface transitioning from said outer wall surface of said first wall extension to said first taper locking surface.

26. (Previously Presented) An air induction component assembly as set forth in claim 25 wherein said second tapered weld surface tapers to a curved surface formed near said second base end, said curved surface transitioning from said second tapered weld surface to said second taper locking surface.

27. (Previously Presented) An air induction component assembly as set forth in claim 26 including a third ledge surface transitioning from said inner wall of said second wall extension to said second tapered weld surface, and a fourth ledge surface transitioning from said outer wall surface of said second wall extension to said second taper locking surface.

28. (Previously Presented) An air induction component assembly as set forth in claim 27 wherein said first and third ledge surfaces are spaced apart from each other to form a first gap when said first and second laser weld surfaces are locked into abutting engagement by said first and second tapered locking surfaces.

29. (Previously Presented) An air induction component assembly as set forth in claim 28 wherein said second and fourth ledge surfaces are in direct contact with each other when said first and second laser weld surfaces are locked into abutting engagement by said first and second tapered locking surfaces.

30. (Previously Presented) An air induction component assembly as set forth in claim 28 wherein said flat surface is spaced apart from said curved surface to form a second gap when said first and second laser weld surfaces are locked into abutting engagement by said first and second tapered locking surfaces.

31. (Cancelled)

32. (Currently Amended) ~~An air induction component assembly as set forth in claim 31~~ An air induction component assembly comprising:

a first shell made from a laser-transparent material defining a first laser weld surface and including a first taper locking surface opposite from said first laser weld surface, and wherein said first shell includes a first transition surface that transitions from said first laser weld surface to said first taper locking surface;

a second shell made from a laser absorbing material defining a second laser weld surface and including a second taper locking surface opposite from said second laser weld surface, and wherein said second shell includes a second transition surface that transitions from said second laser weld surface to said second taper locking surface, and wherein said first laser weld surface comprises a first tapered surface defining a first angle and said second laser weld surface comprises a second tapered surface defining a second angle different than said first angle;

~~wherein~~ said first transition surface ~~includes~~ including a flat segment and said second transition surface ~~includes~~ including a curved segment that directly faces said flat segment; and

a laser weld joint area formed at said first and second laser weld surfaces to permanently attach said first shell to said second shell wherein said first and second taper locking surfaces cooperate with each other to lock said first and second laser weld surfaces into abutting engagement at a predetermined pressure during a laser welding process.